

Guidance for Classroom Discussion Leaders

Where and how should society integrate genetic information? The following vignettes will provide an opportunity for students to explore this question in a variety of settings. They are designed to elicit an open-ended discussion among students. There are no right or wrong answers to ethical issues and each student's feelings must be considered in a broad context.

It is imperative for the discussion leader to dissuade students from the concept of genetic determinism. Human beings are complex systems and many factors play a role in our susceptibilities to disease and behaviors. Genetic determinism denies complexity of the system as well as the influence of personal, social; and environmental interactions.

Some potentially sensitive issues are addressed (e.g., loss of a parent, the death penalty, discrimination, diseases such as breast cancer and Alzheimer's, etc.). Discussion leaders should look out for students that may find these discussions sad or embarrassing.

Some specific guidance:

- ♦ Students should focus on the reasons justifying a position, not on personal arguments.
- ♦ All reasons should count as good reasons for everyone, not just for a few.
- ♦ Religious beliefs and other moral viewpoints are valid, but should be expressed in terms that are important to everyone.
- ♦ In deciding if a reason is a good one, students should think about the consequences of an action on different people and whether the right of individuals are upheld or violated.
- ♦ When some rights conflict with other rights, people have to balance which right is more important and which consequence is worse.